



UPDATE: Summary of November 10, 2016 Meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission

In the first of two scheduled November meetings, the Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High Quality, Affordable Child Care today discussed recommendations it will make to the state of Vermont to better support high-quality, affordable early care and education.

The Commission acknowledged the need to make short-term recommendations to address critical needs as well as long-term recommendations to continue the work of the Commission in envisioning a stronger, equitable, high-quality, affordable early care and education system for Vermont. When reviewing recommendations, they considered many factors, including:

- Economic development and social services
- Vermont is on the national stage and other states will look to see what the Commission recommends
- It's important to invest in ages birth to five (the Commission agreed to use the term "early childhood care and education" [ECCE] in its final report to highlight this).

Short-term recommendations

The Commission created a preliminary list of ideas for short-term recommendations, including:

- Increasing funding for the state's Child Care Financial Assistance Program to address existing funding gaps
- Educating employers about ways to support employees in affording quality child care such as offering a matching contribution fund that allows employees to dedicate pre-tax dollars to child care
- Strategies to support early care and education providers

Commissioners were asked to review the list of recommendations before the next meeting at which point they'll finalize the priority short-term recommendations.

Long-term recommendations

The Commission agreed that a group needs to be tasked with continuing the work started by the Commission to further explore and develop an equitable, high-quality, affordable, publicly-supported ECCE system in which families can afford child care while also being able to meet their other basic financial needs. The Commission also discussed potential funding mechanisms and will review notes from this meeting to inform the conversation at their next meeting.

The commissioners agreed that its report will live with Building Bright Futures (BBF), given BBF's statutory role as the state's early childhood advisory council and that BBF is the natural facilitator for the long-term visioning work.

The Commission noted that though it has accomplished a lot during its tenure, there is still significant work to be done to move this issue forward.

1. Commissioners will provide feedback on the drafts of the report and recommendations to Commission Administrator Jessica Blackman by November 14
2. Public Consulting Group will provide commissioners with revised drafts by November 16 for review at the Commission's November 17 meeting
3. The Commission will finalize the recommendations and the report at its November 17 meeting.

The Commission's next scheduled meeting is Thursday, November 17, 10 AM – 12:30 PM in the Fourth Floor Conference Room of the Pavilion Office Building in Montpelier. The Commission is expected to deliver its report to the governor and Legislature November 28.